

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A guide member placement device for inserting a guide member in a body tissue, comprising:

5 a shaft having a proximal end, a distal end, and a lumen extending therethrough, said lumen adapted for receiving a guidemember; and  
an engaging member said distal end of said shaft for engaging another guide member placement device.

10 2. The guide member placement device of Claim 1, further comprising a blunt dissection tip at the distal end of said shaft and a handle with a lumen extending therethrough, wherein said proximal end of said shaft is attached to said handle such that said lumen of said shaft and said lumen of said handle are aligned.

3. The guide member placement device of Claim 2, wherein said blunt dissection tip is on a blunt dissector within said shaft and is extendable from and retractable in said shaft.

15 4. The guide member placement device of Claim 3, wherein said guide member placement device is adapted for use in urethral floor reconstruction procedures.

5. The guide member placement device of Claim 4, wherein said guide member placement device is adapted for use in bladder neck stabilization procedures.

20 6. The guide member placement device of Claim 5, wherein said engaging member comprises a male connector.

7. The guide member placement device of Claim 5, wherein said engaging member comprises a female connector.

25 8. The guide member placement device of Claim 4, wherein said shaft has a straight proximal section, a bent intermediate section and a distal end oriented at an angle of approximately 90 degrees relative to the proximal section.

9. The guide member placement device of Claim 4, further comprising a guide member removably positioned in said lumen of said shaft.

30 10. The guide member placement device of Claim 4, wherein said guide member comprises a guidewire.

11. The guide member placement device of Claim 4, wherein said guide member comprises a suture.

12. A method of inserting a guide member into a body tissue, comprising the steps of:

5                   percutaneously inserting a shaft of a first guide member placement device;

                  advancing said shaft of said first guide member placement device through the body tissue to a central point through which the guide member will pass;

10                  percutaneously inserting a shaft of a second guide member placement device;

                  advancing said shaft of said second guide member placement device through the body tissue to said central point through which the guide member will pass;

15                  coupling an engaging member on a distal end of said shaft of said first guide member placement device to an engaging member on a distal end of said shaft of said second guide member placement device such that a lumen in said shaft of said first guide member placement device is in fluid communication with a lumen in said shaft of said second guide member placement device;

20                  passing a guide member through said lumens of said coupled shafts of said first guide member placement device and said second guide member placement device; and

                  removing said shaft of said first guide member placement device and said shaft of said second guide member placement device from the body, thereby leaving said guide member in the body tissue.

25                  13. The method of Claim 12, wherein said first and second shafts are percutaneously inserted through first and second suprapubic incisions.

                  14. The method of Claim 13, wherein the shafts of the first and second guide member placement devices are inserted into a pre-formed opening or pocket in the body tissue.

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15. The method of Claim 13, further comprising the step of creating an opening in the body tissue by extending and retracting a blunt dissector tip from at least one of said guide member placement devices.

5 16. The method of Claim 14, wherein said pre-formed opening or pocket is in the tissue between the urethra and the upper vaginal wall, such that said guide member is left in said pre-formed opening or pocket.

17. A sling application catheter comprising a catheter having a sling therein, wherein said sling is releasably engaged with said catheter.

10 18. The sling application catheter of Claim 17, wherein said catheter has a pouch therein for releasably engaging said sling.

19. The sling application catheter of Claim 18, wherein said catheter is adapted to travel over a guide member.

20. The sling application catheter of Claim 19, wherein the distal end of said catheter is tapered.

15 21. The sling application catheter of Claim 20, wherein the distal end of said pouch is tapered.

22. The sling application catheter of Claim 18, wherein said pouch is porous.

20 23. The sling application catheter of Claim 22, wherein said pouch further comprises a stiffener for increasing its rigidity.

24. The sling application catheter of Claim 23, wherein said stiffener is in the interior of said pouch.

25. The sling application catheter of Claim 23, wherein said stiffener is on the exterior of said pouch.

25 26. The sling application catheter of Claim 23, wherein said stiffener is porous.

27. A method of introducing a sling into a body tissue, comprising the steps of:

30 passing a sling application catheter through the body tissue, said sling application catheter comprising a catheter having a sling therein which is releasably engaged to said catheter; and

releasing said sling from said sling application catheter, thereby introducing said sling into said body tissue.

5           28.    The method of Claim 27, further comprising making a first incision and a second incision wherein the step of passing said sling application catheter through said body tissue comprises passing said sling application catheter into said first incision and out of said second incision.

          29.    The method of Claim 28, wherein said sling is released from said sling application catheter by withdrawing said sling from a pouch in said sling application catheter.

10           30.    The method of Claim 29, wherein said sling application catheter is passed through said body tissue over a guide member.

          31.    The method of Claim 30, wherein said sling is introduced into the tissue between the urethra and the upper vaginal wall.

15           32.    The method of Claim 31, wherein said first incision and said second incision are suprapubic incisions.

          33.    The method of Claim 32, further comprising the step of withdrawing said sling from said pouch by grasping an end of said sling while withdrawing the distal end of said sling application catheter out of said second suprapubic incision.

20           34.    The method of Claim 33, wherein the step of withdrawing said sling from said pouch comprises withdrawing a sterile sling.

          35.    A tissue dissector/dilator for creating and dilating an opening or pocket in a body tissue, said tissue dissector/dilator comprising:

                  a body;

                  a noncompliant shaft attached to said body;

25                   a dissector carried on said shaft for creating an opening or pocket in said body tissue; and

                  a dilator carried on said shaft for dilating said opening or pocket in said body tissue.

30           36.    The tissue dissector/dilator of Claim 35, wherein said shaft has a lumen extending therethrough and said dissector is within said lumen in said shaft and is

axially movable, such that said dissector can be extended from and retracted in said shaft.

5           37.    The tissue dissector/dilator of Claim 35, wherein said shaft has a lumen extending therethrough and said dilator is within said lumen in said shaft and is axially movable, such that said dilator can be extended from and retracted in said shaft.

10           38.    The tissue dissector/dilator of Claim 35, wherein said shaft has a lumen extending therethrough and both said dissector and said dilator are within said lumen of said shaft and are axially movable, such that said dissector and said dilator can be extended from and retracted in said shaft.

          39.    The tissue dissector/dilator of Claim 38, wherein said axially movable dissector and said axially movable expandable dilator are integral.

          40.    The tissue dissector/dilator of Claim 39, wherein said tissue dissector/dilator is adapted for use in bladder neck stabilization procedures.

15           41.    The tissue dissector/dilator of Claim 40, wherein said body of said tissue dissector/dilator further comprises:

          a first control member for extending and retracting said axially movable integral dissector and expandable dilator between a first position in which said dissector extends from the shaft, a second position in which both said dissector and said dilator extend from the shaft, and a third position in which said dissector and said dilator are retracted inside said shaft; and

20           a second control member for expanding said dilator in said opening or pocket in said body tissue, thereby dilating said opening or pocket and for collapsing said dilator following dilation of said opening or pocket.

25           42.    The tissue dissector/dilator of Claim 41, wherein said first control member for extending and retracting said axially movable integral dissector and expandable dilator comprises a spring return button which engages said axially movable integral dissector and expandable dilator so as to extend or retract said axially movable integral dissector and expandable dilator.

43. The tissue dissector/dilator of Claim 43, wherein said spring return button can be positioned to lock said axially movable integral dissector and expandable dilator in a fully extended position.

5 44. The tissue dissector/dilator of Claim 43, wherein said spring return button provides a one to one stroke motion to said axially movable integral dissector and expandable dilator.

45. The tissue dissector/dilator of Claim 41, wherein said axially movable integral dissector and expandable dilator is a catheter comprising:

an outer tube having a lumen extending therethrough; and

10 at least one expandable balloon in said lumen of said outer tube, said expandable balloon having an inflation tube at its proximal end and a blunt dissector at its distal end, wherein said inflation tube is in fluid communication with the interior of said balloon.

15 46. The tissue dissector/dilator of Claim 45, wherein said second control member for expanding said dilator comprises:

a trigger on said body;

a syringe in said body comprising a plunger, a reservoir, and a tip; and

20 a syringe locking mechanism, wherein said tip of said syringe fixedly engages said syringe locking mechanism to place said reservoir of said syringe in fluid communication with said balloon catheter, and said trigger engages said plunger of said syringe such that squeezing said trigger depresses said plunger of said syringe thereby dispensing fluid from said syringe and expanding said balloon of said catheter.

25 47. The tissue dissector/dilator of Claim 46, wherein said catheter further comprises a second lumen adapted for passage of a guide member.

48. The tissue dissector/dilator of Claim 47, wherein said catheter further comprises a third lumen.

49. The tissue dissector/dilator of Claim 48, wherein said third lumen is adapted for receiving an ultrasound catheter.

30 50. The tissue dissector/dilator of Claim 48, wherein said third lumen is adapted for receiving an implant.

51. The tissue dissector/dilator of Claim 48, wherein said third lumen is adapted for irrigation.

52. A tissue dissector/dilator for creating and dilating an opening or pocket in a body tissue, comprising:

- 5 a body;
- a noncompliant shaft attached to said body;
- a dissection means carried on said shaft for dissecting an opening or pocket in a body tissue; and
- a dilation means carried on said shaft for dilating the opening or pocket;

10 53. A method of creating and dilating an opening or pocket in a body tissue, comprising the steps of:

- percutaneously inserting a noncompliant shaft of a tissue dissector/dilator into said body tissue;
- advancing said shaft through said body tissue;
- 15 extending a dissector from a distal end of said shaft to create a first opening or pocket in said body tissue; and
- extending a dilator from said distal end of said shaft and expanding said dilator within said first opening or pocket to dilate said first opening or pocket.

20 54. The method of Claim 53, wherein said tissue dissector/dilator is percutaneously inserted through a suprapubic incision.

55. The method of Claim 54, wherein said body tissue is the tissue between the urethra and the upper vaginal wall and said first opening or pocket is perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the urethra and extends from one side of the urethra to the other.

25 56. The method of Claim 53, further comprising:

- percutaneously inserting a noncompliant shaft of a second tissue dissector/dilator into said body tissue;
- advancing said noncompliant shaft of said second tissue dissector/dilator through said body tissue;
- 30 extending a dissector from a distal end of said shaft of said second tissue dissector/dilator to create a second opening or pocket in the tissue; and

extending a dilator from said distal end of said shaft of said second tissue dissector/dilator and expanding said dilator within said second opening or pocket, thereby dilating said second opening or pocket and forming from the first and second openings or pockets a continuous opening or pocket in said body tissue.

57. The method of Claim 56, wherein said second tissue dissector/dilator is percutaneously inserted through a suprapubic incision.

58. The method of Claim 57, wherein the body tissue is the tissue between the urethra and the upper vaginal wall and said continuous opening or pocket is perpendicular to the longitudinal axis of the urethra and extends from one side of the urethra to the other.

59. A sling application device for inserting a sling into a pocket in a body tissue, comprising:

a first shaft and a second shaft, said first and second shafts having lumens extending therethrough, said lumens having dimensions adapted for receiving a sling therein; and

an adjuster for incrementally adjusting the distance between said first and second shafts.

60. The sling application device of Claim 59, wherein said lumens of said first and second shafts have dimensions adapted for receiving a sling introducer having a sling releasably engaged thereto.

61. The sling application device of Claim 60, further comprising a first handle attached to said first shaft and a second handle attached to said second shaft, said first and second handles having openings therein, wherein said openings in said first and second handles are in fluid communication with said lumens in said shafts to which said handles are attached, and said first and second handles are adapted to be connected to one another.

62. The sling application device of Claim 61, wherein said adjuster engages said first and second handles.

63. The sling application device of Claim 62, wherein said first and second shafts are curved.



64. The sling application device of Claim 63, wherein said first and second shafts have a small radius 90° curve at their distal ends, such that said first and second shafts are adapted for use in urethral stabilization procedures.

5 65. The sling application device of Claim 64, wherein said first and second shafts have a side bend.

66. The sling application device of Claim 64, wherein said radius of curvature at the distal ends of said first and second shafts is not planar with the axial portions of the shafts of said first and second shafts.

10 67. The sling application device of Claim 59, wherein the upper edges of the distal ends of the first and second shafts are indented relative to the lower edges.

68. The sling application device of Claim 61, wherein said first and second handles are adapted for interlocking.

69. The sling application device of Claim 59, wherein said adjuster comprises an articulating lock.

15 70. The sling application device of Claim 59, wherein said first shaft and said second shaft are cylindrical.

71. The sling application device of Claim 59, wherein said first shaft and said second shaft comprise flat tubes.

20 72. The sling application device of Claim 59, wherein the portion of said first shaft and said second shaft proximal to the bend is cylindrical and the portion distal to the bend is a flat tube.

73. The sling application device of Claim 59, wherein the proximal portions of said first and second shafts are oriented at an angle of about 90° relative to the distal portions of said first and second shafts.

25 74. The sling application device of Claim 59, further comprising a blunt dissector for dissecting the body tissue without scoring or creasing tissue or bone with which it comes in contact, said blunt dissector comprising a dissector shaft adapted for insertion into said first and second shafts of said sling application device, said dissector shaft having a generally rigid tip at its distal end, wherein said generally  
30 rigid tip protrudes from the distal ends of said first and second shafts of said sling

application device when said blunt dissector is inserted into said first and second shafts of said sling application device.

75. The sling application device of Claim 74, wherein said blunt dissector comprises an obturator.

5 76. A sling introducer adapted for introducing a sling attached thereto into an opening or pocket in a body tissue without the use of sutures, said sling introducer comprising a sling engager having said sling releasably engaged thereto, said sling engager adapted for advancement through a first shaft and a second shaft of a sling application device, wherein the length of said sling introducer is at least equal to the  
10 sum of the lengths of said first and second shafts of said sling application device.

77. The sling introducer of Claim 76, wherein said sling engager comprises a pouch for releasably engaging said sling.

78. The sling introducer of Claim 77, wherein said pouch has pores therein for permitting a solution to access said sling.

15 79. The sling introducer of Claim 77, wherein the distal end of said pouch has a narrow lead.

80. The sling introducer of Claim 77, wherein said pouch is reinforced.

81. A tissue cutter for forming a cavity a in tissue comprising:

20 an elongated housing adapted to fit within a shaft of a sling application device; and

an extendable and retractable blade within said housing, said blade adapted to form said cavity in said tissue.

82. The tissue cutter of Claim 81, wherein said blade comprises a razor.

25 83. The tissue cutter of Claim 82, wherein said razor is sized such that said cavity formed with said razor has dimensions adapted for insertion of a sling therein.

84. A sling application system comprising:

30 a sling application device comprising a first shaft and a second shaft, said first and second shafts having lumens extending therethrough, said lumens having dimensions adapted for receiving a sling introducer therein, said sling application device also comprising an adjuster for incrementally adjusting the distance between said first and second shafts;

a blunt dissector for dissecting a body tissue without scoring or creasing tissue or bone with which it comes in contact, said blunt dissector comprising a dissector shaft adapted for insertion into said first and second shafts of said sling application device, said dissector shaft having a generally rigid tip at its distal end, wherein said generally rigid tip protrudes from the distal ends of said first and second shafts of said sling application device when said blunt dissector is inserted into said first and second shafts; and

said sling introducer for introducing a sling attached thereto into an opening or pocket in the body tissue without the use of sutures, said sling introducer comprising a sling engager having said sling releasably engaged thereto, said sling engager adapted for advancement through said lumens of said first and second shafts of said sling application device, wherein said sling introducer has a length sufficient to extend between the first and second shafts of said sling application device.

85. The sling application system of Claim 84, further comprising a tissue cutter for forming a cavity in the body tissue, said tissue cutter comprising:

an elongated housing adapted to fit within said second shaft of said sling application device; and

an extendable and retractable blade within said housing, said blade adapted to form said cavity in the body tissue.

86. A method for introducing a sling into a body tissue comprising:

inserting a first blunt dissector into a first shaft of a sling application device;

percutaneously inserting said first shaft having said first blunt dissector therein;

advancing said first shaft through the body tissue;

inserting a second blunt dissector into a second shaft of said sling application device;

percutaneously inserting said second shaft having said second blunt dissector therein;

advancing said second shaft through the body tissue;

decreasing the distance between the distal ends of said first and second shafts;

advancing a sling introducer having said sling releasably engaged thereto between said first and second shafts of said sling application device;

5 releasing said sling from said sling introducer; and

removing said first and second shafts from the body tissue, thereby introducing said sling into the body tissue.

87. The method of Claim 86, further comprising making a first incision and a second incision wherein said first shaft of said sling application device is inserted  
10 into said first incision prior to advancing it through said body tissue and said second shaft of said sling application device is inserted into said second incision prior to advancing it through said body tissue.

88. The method of Claim 87, wherein said sling is introduced into a pre-formed pocket in the tissue between the urethra and the vaginal wall.

15 89. The method of Claim 88, wherein said first incision and said second incision are suprapubic incisions.

90. The method of Claim 86, further comprising inserting a tissue cutter into said first shaft of the sling application device and extending the tissue cutter into the body tissue between the distal ends of said first and second shafts, thereby  
20 dissecting said body tissue.

91. A balloon catheter comprising:

an outer tube having a lumen extending therethrough; and

at least one expandable balloon adapted for dilating an opening or pocket in the tissue between the urethra and the upper vaginal wall, said  
25 expandable balloon having a proximal end and a distal end in said lumen of said outer tube, said expandable balloon also having an inflation tube at its proximal end, said inflation tube being in fluid communication with the interior of said balloon.

92. The balloon catheter of Claim 91, wherein said expandable balloon has  
30 a blunt dissection tip at its distal end, said blunt dissection tip having sufficient rigidity to allow it to create an opening or pocket in said solid body tissue.

93. The balloon catheter of Claim 92, comprising a plurality of expandable balloons in fluid communication with said inflation tube.

94. The balloon catheter of Claim 92, wherein said balloon catheter is adapted to fit in the lumen of a large bore needle.

5 95. The balloon catheter of Claim 92, wherein said expandable balloon has a flat profile.

96. The balloon catheter of Claim 95, wherein said balloon further comprises internal non-expansive ribs.

10 97. The balloon catheter of Claim 96, wherein said catheter extends into the interior of said balloon.

98. The balloon catheter of Claim 97, wherein said balloon is on the exterior surface of said catheter.

15 99. A detachable member sling application device for introducing a sling having sutures attached thereto into an opening or pocket in a body tissue, comprising:  
a housing;

an introduction shaft connected to said housing, said introduction shaft having a lumen extending therethrough, said lumen adapted to receive said sling having sutures attached thereto; and

20 a detachable member on the distal end of said introduction shaft, said detachable member being connected to at least one of said sutures attached to said sling.

100. The detachable member sling application device of Claim 99, further comprising an axially movable needle, said needle comprising a needle shaft and a sharpened point, said needle being located inside said lumen of said introduction shaft and extendable therefrom.

25 101. A retrieval device for introducing a sling into an opening or pocket in a body tissue, comprising a shaft having an engaging member at its distal end, wherein said engaging member is adapted to engage a detachable member connected to a suture attached to said sling.

30 102. A method of stabilizing the bladder neck comprising the steps of:

forming a pocket or opening in said the tissue between the urethra and the upper vaginal wall;

inserting a sling application device into said pocket or opening;

introducing a sling into said pocket or opening with said sling application device; and

securing said sling to tissue or bone to stabilize the bladder neck.

103. The method of Claim 102, further comprising:

providing a detachable member sling application device comprising a housing,

an introduction shaft connected to said housing, said introduction shaft having a lumen extending therethrough, said lumen adapted to receive said sling having sutures attached thereto, said detachable member sling application device also comprising a detachable member on the distal end of said introduction shaft, said detachable member being connected to at least one of said sutures attached to said sling, wherein the step of inserting a sling application device into said pocket or opening comprises inserting said detachable member sling application device into said opening or pocket;

detaching a detachable member from a distal end of said shaft of said detachable member sling application device, said detachable member being connected to said sling;

introducing a shaft of a retrieval device into said opening or pocket;

engaging said detachable member with an engaging member on said shaft of said retrieval device; and

withdrawing said shaft of said retrieval device from said opening or pocket, thereby introducing said sling of said detachable member sling application device into said opening or pocket.

104. The method of Claim 103, further comprising:

extending an axially movable needle from a distal end of said shaft of said detachable member sling application device into said body tissue; and

toggling said needle to move said detachable member within said opening or pocket.

105. The method of Claim 104, wherein said opening or pocket is in a hiatus between a urethra and an upper vaginal wall.

106. The method of Claim 105, further comprising the step of expanding said opening or pocket in the hiatus using a balloon catheter having at least one expandable  
5 balloon with a blunt dissection tip at its distal end, said blunt dissection tip having sufficient rigidity to allow it to make said opening in said body tissue when contacting said tissue.

107. A device for expanding an opening or pocket within a body tissue, said device comprising:  
10 a tube having a lumen extending therethrough;  
an axially movable expandable and collapsible expansion basket attached to said tube for insertion into said opening or pocket within the body tissue and expansion thereof; and  
an expansion and collapse control in communication with said  
15 expandable and collapsible basket for expanding and collapsing said basket.

108. The device of Claim 107, wherein said basket comprises a plurality of wires.

109. The device of Claim 108, wherein said expansion and collapse control comprises a pull wire.

110. A grasping device adapted for insertion into a lumen of an expansion device, said expansion device having an expansion basket for expanding an opening  
20 or pocket within a body tissue, said grasping device comprising a catheter having a grasping member on its distal end for grasping a suture or guide member which has been advanced into said expansion basket of said expansion device.

111. The grasping device of Claim 110, wherein said grasping member comprises a self-expanding basket.

112. The grasping device of Claim 111, wherein said self-expanding basket is adapted to fit inside said expansion basket of said expansion device when said expansion basket of said expansion device is in an expanded configuration.

113. A method of creating a pocket in the tissue between the urethra and the  
30 upper vaginal wall comprising hydrodissecting said tissue.

114. A method for holding a pocket in a body tissue in an open position, comprising:

making a lumen in the body tissue;

expanding said lumen in the body tissue to create said pocket in said

5 body tissue;

inserting an expansion device into said pocket; and

expanding an expansion basket on said expansion device in said pocket,

thereby holding said pocket in said open position.

115. The method of Claim 114, wherein said body tissue comprises a hiatus  
10 between a urethra and an upper vaginal wall.

116. The method of Claim 115, wherein said lumen is expanded with a  
balloon catheter .

117. The method of Claim 116, further comprising the steps of:

15 inserting a suture or guide member through a suprapubic incision into  
said pocket;

inserting a grasping device comprising a catheter having a grasping  
member on its distal end into a lumen of said expansion device;

grasping said suture or guide member with said grasping device;

withdrawing said suture or guide member to a desired position.

20 118. The method of Claim 117, wherein said suture or guide member is  
grasped under direct vision.

119. A method of introducing a sling into a pocket in a body tissue  
comprising:

a) making a lumen in the body tissue;

25 b) creating a pocket in said body tissue;

c) holding said pocket in an open position;

d) inserting a suture or guide member into said pocket in said body  
tissue, wherein said suture is on a first side of a urethra;

e) grasping said suture or guide member;

30 f) withdrawing said suture or guide member outside of said body tissue  
through said lumen;



- g) repeating steps (d) through (f) on a second side of said urethra;
- h) tying the two sutures together; and
- i) guiding said sling into said pocket using said sutures.

5        120. The method of Claim 119, wherein said body tissue comprises a hiatus between said urethra and an upper vaginal wall.

121. A method of introducing a sling into an opening in a body tissue comprising:

- a) making a lumen in the body tissue;
- b) creating a pocket in said body tissue;
- 10        c) holding said pocket in an open position;
- d) inserting a suture or guide member into said pocket in said body tissue, wherein said suture is on a first side of a urethra;
- e) grasping said suture or guide member;
- f) withdrawing said suture or guide member outside of said body tissue
- 15        through said lumen;
- g) repeating steps (d) through (f) on a second side of said urethra;
- h) attaching a sling to the two sutures outside of said body tissue; and
- i) introducing the sling through said lumen into said pocket in said body tissue.

20        122. The method of Claim 121, wherein said body tissue comprises a hiatus between said urethra and an upper vaginal wall.

123. A method for treating female urinary incontinence comprising,  
inserting a needle having a curved portion percutaneously into the body and  
through the vaginal wall;  
attaching a sling assembly end to an end of the needle subsequent to insertion  
5 through the vaginal wall; and  
withdrawing the needle to place at least a portion of the sling assembly under the  
urethra.

124. The method of claim 123, wherein the sling assembly includes an element for receiving a  
distal end of the needle.

10 125. The method of claim 123, comprising inserting the needle via the abdomen.

126. The method of claim 123, wherein the needle comprises a channel for receiving the sling  
assembly end.

127. The method of claim 126, comprising locking the sling assembly end in the channel.

128. The method of claim 127, comprising unlocking the sling assembly end from the channel  
15 subsequent to withdrawing the needle.

129. The method of claim 123, comprising detaching the sling assembly end from the needle  
end subsequent to withdrawing the needle.

130. The method of claim 123, wherein the sling assembly includes a sling.

131. The method of claim 123, wherein the sling assembly includes a sling and a pouch for at  
20 least partially enclosing the sling.

132. The method of claim 131, comprising removing the sling from the pouch.

133. A method for treating female urinary incontinence comprising,  
inserting a needle having a curved portion percutaneously into the body and  
through the vaginal wall;  
25 interlockingly attaching a sling assembly end to an end of the needle subsequent  
to insertion through the vaginal wall; and  
withdrawing the curved needle to pull a portion of the sling assembly through the  
vaginal wall to place at least a portion of the sling assembly under the urethra.

134. The method of claim 133, comprising inserting the needle via the abdomen.
135. The method of claim 133, comprising detaching the sling assembly end from the needle subsequent to withdrawing the needle.
136. The method of claim 133, wherein the sling assembly includes a sling.
- 5 137. The method of claim 133, wherein the sling assembly includes a sling and a pouch for at least partially enclosing the sling.
138. The method of claim 137, comprising removing the sling from the pouch.
139. A method for treating female urinary incontinence comprising,  
inserting two needles percutaneously into the body and through the vaginal wall;  
10 attaching a first end of a sling assembly to the first needle;  
attaching a second end of the sling assembly to the second needle; and  
placing at least a portion of the sling assembly under the urethra.
140. The method of claim 139, wherein the step of inserting includes the step of inserting the first needle and then inserting the second needle.
- 15 141. The method of claim 139, comprising inserting the needles via the abdomen.
142. The method of claim 139, comprising withdrawing the needles to place at least a portion of the sling assembly under the urethra.
143. The method of claim 139, comprising detaching the sling assembly ends from the needles subsequent to withdrawing the needles from the body.
- 20 144. The method of claim 139, wherein the sling assembly includes a sling.
145. The method of claim 139, wherein the sling assembly includes a sling and a pouch for at least partially enclosing the sling.
146. The method of claim 145, comprising removing the sling from the pouch.
147. A method for treating female urinary incontinence comprising,  
25 inserting a needle element having a curved portion percutaneously into the body  
and through the vaginal wall;  
interlockingly connecting a sling assembly with an end of the needle element; and

withdrawing the needle element to place at least a portion of the sling assembly under the urethra.

148. The method of claim 147, wherein the sling assembly is locked in a channel located at an end of the needle element.

5 149. The method of claim 147, wherein the sling assembly is releasably locked in a channel located at an end of the needle element.

150. The method of claim 147, comprising detaching the sling assembly from the needle element subsequent to withdrawing the needle element from the body.

151. The method of claim 147, wherein the sling assembly includes a sling.

10 152. The method of claim 147, wherein the sling assembly comprises an elongated extension located at an end of the sling assembly.

153. The method of claim 147, wherein the sling assembly comprises an aperture located at an end of the sling assembly.

15 154. The method of claim 147, wherein the sling assembly includes a sling and a pouch for at least partially enclosing the sling.

155. The method of claim 154, wherein the pouch comprises an opening along its length.

156. The method of claim 154, wherein the pouch is substantially flat.